



## Warning Signs of Abuse

Children who are abused may show physical and behavioral signs. You may be a child's only lifeline to safety. Please pay attention to the treatment of children around you. **Child abuse is everyone's business.** If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected in Illinois, call 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873)

### **Children who have been abused or neglected may be:**

- Nervous around adults or afraid of certain adults
- Reluctant to go home (coming to school early or staying late, for example)
- Very passive and withdrawn—or aggressive and disruptive
- Tired often or complaining of nightmares, or not sleeping well
- Fearful and anxious
- Showing sudden changes in behavior or school performance

### **Possible signs of physical abuse:**

- Unexplained burns, bruises, black eyes and other injuries
- Apparent fear of a parent or caretaker
- Faded bruises or healing injuries after missing school

### **Possible signs of sexual abuse:**

- Difficulty walking or sitting, or other indications of injury to the genital area
- Sexual knowledge or behavior beyond what is normal for the child's age
- Running away from home

### **Possible signs of neglect:**

- Missing school frequently
- Begging for or stealing money or food
- Lacking needed medical or dental care
- Being frequently dirty
- Using alcohol or other drugs
- Saying there is no one at home to take care of him or her

### **Possible signs of emotional abuse:**

- Acting overly mature or immature for the child's age
- Extreme changes in behavior
- Delays in physical or emotional development
- Attempted suicide
- Lack of emotional attachment to the parent

*Many of these signs may also be present in children exposed to violence in their homes and communities, like domestic violence and gang violence. These signs don't prove that a child is being abused. But they could be a signal that the child and his or her family need help.*

### **Also know the signs of an abusive adult. Consider the possibility of abuse if a parent or caretaker:**

- Seems unconcerned about the child's welfare at school or at home
- Denies problems at school or at home—or blames the child for them
- Sees the child as worthless or as a burden
- Avoids discussing the child's injuries or gives conflicting explanations for them
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs
- Seems isolated from other parents and school and community activities
- Uses harsh physical discipline or asks other caretakers to use it
- Depends on the child for emotional support
- Seems indifferent to the child
- Seems secretive or tries to isolate the child from other children
- Frequently blames, belittles, or insults the child

*These signs don't prove that an adult is abusive. But they could be a signal that the adult and his or her family need help.*

**Prevent Child Abuse Illinois**

[www.preventchildabuseillinois.org](http://www.preventchildabuseillinois.org)

